

THE NATION AND ATHENÆUM, NOVEMBER 10, 1928.

LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

THE NATION AND ATHENÆUM

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1928.

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THE NATION

AND ATHENÆUM

LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

ART AND CRITICISM

The Making of Literature. By R. A. SCOTT-JAMES. (Secker. 18s.)

IN his preface, the author of this book tells us that it is based on a series of lectures given at King's College, London, in connection with the Diploma of Journalism. When giving these lectures Mr. Scott-James discovered that there was no book available which he could recommend for a comprehensive view of the subject in hand. What he required was not a history of criticism, nor a statement of a philosophical theory of art. It was not æsthetics, much less was it psychology. It was rather the evolution of the conception of the art of literature held by representative writers of each epoch. The plan was to examine inductively "the central problems of the art of literature as they have presented themselves to men experienced in the arts—from Homer to Hardy, from Aristotle to the modern critics."

The result is a book of twenty-nine chapters and four hundred pages. It is a sound book and a sane book; Mr. Scott-James's taste is impeccable and all his judgments have an air of sweet reason. But something in the structure or the motive of the book clogs its movement and destroys its vitality. Is it possible that the author has imagined a false category? It is a common mistake in reasoning of all kinds, and means that instead of flogging a dead horse you flog a horse that was never alive. The history of criticism is a perfectly good and a very definite subject. For some reason it does not satisfy Mr. Scott-James. He wants instead "to discover principles of art based upon the conscious evidence of the greatest creative writers." "I have found," he says, "that the pertinent question generally assumes the form 'What is the artist?' rather than 'What is the critic?'" For it is only when we understand the problems of the artist that those of the critic come into being." It would, of course, be a fair field to try and define the nature of æsthetic activities and particularly of literary expression on the evidence of those "experienced in the arts." That would give us a descriptive psychology of the creative process in literature, parallel to an analytical psychology. But that is not Mr. Scott-James's purpose. He wants to deduce an evolution of the principles of criticism by the same method. This attempt would seem to be based on the assumption that the best writer is always the best critic, or as Ben Jonson expressed it, that "to judge of poets is only the faculty of poets." The truth is rather that poetry and criticism are entirely different faculties; they are established on different grounds and have a different point of view. We might even venture the observation that the excellent poet is almost always an indifferent or at any rate an amateur critic. Shelley and Blake are typical examples, and even apparent exceptions like Coleridge and Goethe are really examples of writers in whom the critical and creative faculties are at continual war, to the detriment of both functions. Criticism is either a science and as such a faculty with principles which have been slowly evolved and which are capable of formulation—or it is just nothing at all of an abstract or definable nature, a mere personal taste, an individual and insatiable curiosity for what is interesting; and that is equally a distinterested faculty. "The book I am reading is the one I like best of all," was the famous sentiment of Bayle, and what an admirable critic, in one sense, such a disposition makes a man! Mr. Scott-James refers to Sainte-Beuve's presentation of Bayle as the ideal critic, and pours scorn on it. But is the ideal so easily dismissed? Here is Mr. Scott-James's paraphrase of Sainte-Beuve:—

"What is this ideal? It is shown as that of a man who should have no art of his own, no distinctive style, no special views which he wishes to propagate, no strong bent in religion, no passion towards life, no predilections disposing him to favour this or that opinion, this or that form of art. He should have no creative genius, no philosophic system.

Distractions of this kind would limit his proper critical genius. He must be the same to all men. His characteristic quality will be an infinite curiosity, which will accompany him on his endless travels with all sorts of persons in all sorts of country. His part is to relax himself so that he may see and understand all things from the point of view of each author whom he pursues, laying himself open to the influence of that other's art, style, and thought, and never obscuring these with his own. He must be tolerant, dispassionate, balanced, curious, aware that 'everything is possible, and nothing certain.'"

Sainte-Beuve also adds that the true critic is always something of an optimist.

Mr. Scott-James is quite passionate in his protest against this ideal:—

"How can the man whose soul is stripped of all those elements which are of the very stuff of art—the passions, preferences, impulses towards nature, or religion, the many strong opinions, the many marked sensibilities, which, experienced or at least comprehended by the artist, are woven into his work—how can such a man understand what the artist has written? If it be asserted that it is not necessary for the artist to experience what he portrays, that it is enough for him to have observed and understood, the argument is unaffected—we must still ask, How can the critic possibly criticize till he has come to the same understanding, through the capacity of his spirit to adopt the same sentiment and sensitive attitude towards observed experience? What the artist feels or is aware of, the critic also must be able to feel or be aware of. What the one has been able to construct, the other must be able to reconstruct; and unless imagination and creation enter into the reconstruction it will not be a reconstruction—it will be something less than the original, or different; and to that extent the criticism will be inefficient."

And Mr. Scott-James then asks: "Are we then to say that the critic is himself an artist?" and answers "Surely, yes." But we answer emphatically No. Criticism is not reconstruction. He is a poor gourmet who wants to know how the dish was cooked. The acceptance and enjoyment of a work of art has nothing to do with the way in which it is created and presented. A work of art is a completed act; it is a unity, to be accepted as a whole. If it incites us to probe into its origins, it is probably an imperfect work of art, or we are queasy critics—not optimistic enough.

That is accepting the Sainte-Beuve ideal. It is not the only ideal of criticism, as a consideration of the case of Aristotle quickly makes clear. The Aristotelian critic has a good deal in common with the Sainte-Beuvian critic: the same dispassionateness, the same curiosity, the same tolerance. He differs in his desire to generalize, and in his representative point of view. His observations may be general, as when he says that poetry is more philosophic than history; or detailed and particular, as when he says that metaphors are inappropriate in a prose style. Such observations the Aristotelian critic will want to draw together into a systematic treatise on the arts of writing. As for a representative point of view, the same critic will quickly realize that the process of writing is one subject, and an affair between the critic and the poet, whilst the appreciation of literature is another subject, and an affair between the critic and the public. Can the critic preserve the same dispassionateness in this relationship? It is to be doubted. Art is only one aspect of life, though perhaps one of the most important. The critic has to establish its importance, and to do this he has to identify himself with the community, and adopt a point of view that is philosophic rather than literary, and moral rather than æsthetic. Mr. Scott-James rightly concludes, in a chapter on "Art and Morality," that it is not the business of art to convey moral truths, but that does not exempt criticism from a moral point of view. It is only one more reason why we cannot accept the dictum that "to judge of poets is only the faculty of poets."

It would not be just to leave Mr. Scott-James's book without paying a tribute to its thoroughness. He covers

the whole history of his subject, and his summaries are fairly proportioned and accurate. He is rather scornful of "these clever young people," from which one would judge that he is sixty rather than forty; but he has done these young people the honour of making himself acquainted with their point of view.

HERBERT READ.

TRAVEL AND ADVENTURE

Through Europe and the Balkans. By LIEUTENANT-COLONEL P. T. ETHERTON and A. DUNSCOMBE ALLEN. (Cassell. 12s. 6d.)

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The New Lotus-Eaters. By DOROTHY BUCK. (Arrowsmith. 15s.)

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The Land Pirates of India. By W. J. HATCH. (Seeley & Service. 21s.)

The Kalahari and its Native Races. By E. H. L. SCHWARZ. (Witherby. 16s.)

Chronicles of Kenya. By A. DAVIS and H. J. ROBERTSON. (Palmer. 7s. 6d.)

The Call of the Veld. By LEONARD FLEMMING. (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.)

My Perilous Life in Palestine. By ROSAMUND DALE OWEN. (Allen & Unwin. 12s. 6d.)

The Murmansk Venture. By MAJOR-GENERAL SIR C. MAYNARD. (Hodder & Stoughton. 20s.)

GOLDSMITH, who ought to be remembered in his bicentenary year by travellers as well as by reviewers, went through Europe on the strength of a good voice and a German flute; as these qualifications fell below the common standard in Italy, he earned his living there by philosophical disputation at places of learning. Such methods might work even now, but the rambles whose volumes occupy most of our catalogue have not copied them. The sound of the flute is gone, and instead we hear the motor-horn, particularly in the narrative of Colonel Etherton and Mr. Allen, who traversed the Continent under official arrangements to investigate the conditions for automobile touring. Naturally the world under this new order of things is sketchy, but the book is genial and something more than a disguised itinerary for future motorists hurrying through old kingdoms. Goldsmith would have enjoyed his luck if these two pioneers had given him a lift. One characteristic of the record is the general good nature encountered. The Balkans are not so bellicose as Oxford Street. The roads also seem more adapted to the purpose of moving on, and it was only after 2,838 miles that the new Fury, Puncture, confronted our gallant countrymen.

The desert, though capable of being rendered in beautiful colours, is still difficult territory for the affections of most Northerners. Hafsa, "an American citizen of distinguished Arab and Spanish descent," expresses her view of it in delicate and eloquent passages; her portrait of the mehari camel is a specially choice piece of writing. Her accounts of Algerian life are sympathetic in an unusual degree; but the book as a whole would have gained by a quickening of descriptive pace. The intention of "The New Lotus-Eaters" is less profound and the pace very much quicker. "We decided on Tunisia in the end." The writer and her friend Esmeralda, whose witty presence makes a constant variety for the reader, sparkled through Tunisian peculiarities; collected tales which provide the shades of the picture; and took part in amusing conversations, which have been noted down with brilliance, even to Mrs. Thomas's perfect mistake about her nephew's Tokyo address. The romantic element, here watchfully admitted, has taken charge of Mr. Casey's Baghdad perambulation, which begins with an "Apology to Scheherezade." He stands by his predilection: "Baghdad will always be Baghdad the Golden in spite of ice machines and electric lights and taxicabs, so long as men have time to read about it." The ghosts of Zenobia and Semiramis for

him, not the troublesome tidy blue-eyed "Angles." Here Sindbad passed. But in the pauses of old harmony Mr. Casey notices the thin voice of the year 1928, speaking through the bookseller in Baghdad: "You wish Awenree." O. Henry would surely have flourished in the air of the Arabian Nights.

Mr. Hervey set out to meditate among other tombs of the Orient, his base being Saigon, of which particoloured capital he gives his attractive impressions. They ought not perhaps, to be attractive. They hint the paradox of the conqueror conquered, and a life without structure; all the same, one hopes to saunter in Saigon. For the temples and ceremonies of Angkor-wat and Wat-phu, his exuberant style is not such a persuasive advocate. The Eastern temple and ceremonial need no rhetoric, and our author's best strokes of perception are worth a calm setting. The Dragon is essentially peaceful. Mr. Krarup-Nielsen would differ, for he as a Danish newspaper correspondent went to watch the Dragon breathing anti-foreign fire. But in fact the Dragon gave him every facility, considering the Dragon's harassed circumstances, to bring off "a book of little pictures from a great period." Captain McCullagh observes a peculiarly noxious dragon in Mexico, many-headed, but with the general form of President Calles, whose biography he writes in the style of the Newgate Calendar, observing that the subject, being "morbidly sensitive," "may even object to the present book." We doubt it. The Captain is impartial with his denunciations, large and small. All liberals and humanitarians whose eyes are not fixed on Mexican crimes—he gives elaborate accounts of political executions, with photographs, which certainly arouse one's horror—come under his censure. Calles is not "all alone."

Our attention now turns to those books which are not the product of flying visits and favourite dreams, but of long residence and experience. This quiet-toned study of the Kuravers by Mr. Hatch seems to be the first apology for a race of men in whom the Madras Police take a necessary interest. A definition of them is readily found in Mr. Hatch's pages—"He had only spent five years in gaol. This was a fine record for a Kuraver." Mr. Hatch observes the manners and customs, superstitions, sorcery, children's games, in short, all that it takes years of patience to observe about his land pirates. He appears to have their confidence, though occasionally there is a discrepancy. "I myself," he will mention in passing, "it is said, was secretly operated upon by a sorcerer some years ago, but he only succeeded in making me ill when I was inquiring into a murder case." Herr Wilhelm during a quarter of a century in China has seen the face of things wear many changes of expression since he woke up in his first hotel at Tsingtao with a crowing cock on his bed, but he knows what a security of human worth lies behind those changes. The Germans in the Far East are appreciated because of the allowances they make for mutual misunderstandings, and the simple and patient style in which they acquaint themselves with the life, and lives, among which they move. This excellent book, curious in detail, solid in decision, embodies such humanity. It has been translated in the manner which its quality deserves.

The Kalahari is a region of sand, with the Victoria Falls on its extremity, and Mr. Schwarz, the Professor of Geology at Rhodes University College, Grahamstown, made a wonderful journey through it by boat, and waggon, in a spirit of cheerful realism and scientific vigilance. He calls the Kalahari the "sanctuary" of primitive races, and his book falls into two divisions; the first, his travels, told with dry wit and plenty of incident; the second, a directory of native races with their characteristics. Here, too, there is an admirable spirit of personal contact and real internationalism. Mr. Flemming puts forth a new edition of his Veld autobiography—a romance of real life, for he has turned a desolate expanse into a splendid farm, and will not cease, for instance, from planting trees in the neighbourhood of his conquest until the 500,000th is there. Mr. Galsworthy writes a "foreword" to this story of a generous heart and tremendous industry. Looking away to Kenya, we imagine local supper-parties discussing the "Chronicles" which two ready writers have produced—composite portraits, parodies of local manners, administration, speeches. There is wit enough here to please even those who "ask Singapore" or maintain that the



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JONATHAN CAPE THIRTY BEDFORD SQUARE LONDON

colonist in Kenya is in fact "trustee to the African." For, beneath the light style, a serious argument is intended.

The grand-daughter of Robert Owen married Laurence Oliphant, and later on purchased the original Armageddon, which caused endless legal perplexities. Her memoirs are capricious, times and movements being entangled; there are Voices and Visions which should guide the reader, as they have guided the authoress, but he may lose his way between America and Palestine. The latest days of Laurence Oliphant are, at any rate, recorded with devoted completeness, and inseparable pathos; for the marriage with Miss Owen had hardly been announced when the novelist died. From these records of personality we turn to a very different work—Sir Charles Maynard's account of the British campaign in North Russia in 1918 and 1919. It is unadorned and natural, and every way to our liking; the author was not like commanders of larger forces, detached and abstract, but himself within reach of what was happening. The daily round was domestic, realistic, and direct, and the narrative reflects it so, with a background of history and scenery quite unusual for British campaigning. Addressing a Russian deputation or street crowd, awarding medals to local boat-women, holding up trainloads of opponents, or keeping up the unity of his force, Sir Charles preserved the faculty of enjoying life, and now he conducts his literary campaign with similar sturdiness.

MEMORIES

The Memoirs of J. M. Dent, 1849-1926. Edited by HUGH R. DENT (Dent. 7s. 6d.)

Several of My Lives. By LOUIS N. PARKER. (Chapman & Hall. 21s.)

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Letters of the Hon. Mrs. Edward Twisleton, 1852-1862. (Murray. 16s.)

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I Tell You. By ALBERT DE COURVILLE. (Chapman & Hall. 18s.)

A Diplomatist in the East. By the RT. HON. SIR ARTHUR HARDINGE. (Cape. 16s.)

Memories of Bygone Eton. By HENRY S. SALT. (Hutchinson. 10s. 6d.)

It is not only the natural egotism in humanity that makes personal records and reminiscences so tempting to produce. The subject is an easy one; it requires neither invention nor research, and can even be embarked on without regard for form or construction beyond a general adherence to obvious pre-Einsteinian chronology. The only positive necessity is to write with the material of life. There are various ways of using this material: a general whole, a magnified section, or selected parts may be presented. The first method, that of the full-dress autobiography, is adopted by J. M. Dent and Mr. Parker. Their two books have qualities in common which render them, taken complete, the most interesting and readable on the list. Each of the authors, being gifted with a literary sense, is aware of the value of manner besides matter, and having plenty of the requisite material, moulds and organizes, constructing a certain unity out of the haphazardness of life. Actually, comparison, when driven to particulars, yields to contrast. The keynote of Mr. Parker's record is sparkle and light gaiety, where Dent's is patient perseverance, with a lurking consciousness of life's tragic side, and a leaning towards the sentimental. His work and aspirations being centred exclusively in book production, he tells the story of his publishing career with the single-minded simplicity of a man who is earnest, generous, ambitious, and unencumbered by too keen a sense of humour. The whole narrative is written in low tones, yet a continuous smouldering intensity drives out all hint of the monotonous. Frequent reflective passages, and a series of letters to a friend, show that the author was of a meditative turn of mind, although there is nothing in the least unorthodox about the thought expressed. Nor should there be; for if a publisher must gauge the requirements of the public he expects to attract, then the founder of Everyman's Library

should be in sympathy with the intellectual needs of every man.

To turn from Dent's to Mr. Parker's life means shifting the centrality from aim to incident. Faced with a wealth of matter that has no main contour such as the achievement of a single aim supplies, Mr. Parker might easily have become discursive, formless, even dull. Instead, he is extremely entertaining. First, he has cut his richness into quarters, representing his early, musical, theatrical, and pageant lives. And secondly, he writes well. In his book this feature assumes more importance than the cataloguing of events: since the most attractive part concerns his childhood, when events loomed up as shadows and sensations. An existence which was cosmopolitan, peripatetic, fluid, is conveyed in an almost impressionistic style. Such an account, in which life goes by in flashes that leap oddly from obscurity, can only be written long after the experience. It is quite different from the magnified section, or immediate memorandum, which forms the second type of personal record on this list. Here, life becomes very detailed and immensely long. Roosevelt is found writing in his journal of "homesickness and longings for the past which will come again never, alack never." He was just eleven, and had been travelling in Europe for six months. Whether or not these diaries are of interest to the reader depends on the way in which they are approached. If the assumption is that any words written by the future president should be momentous, characteristic, and original, the book is an entire failure. To call it, as the publisher does, "revealing of the real Roosevelt" is, to say the least of it, unfair. But considered as what it obviously is—the journal of a slightly precocious child awake to all the novelties of "abroad"—there is attraction in the laconic registering of facts and observations with the unselfconscious brevity and directness of the youthful mind. "We saw two ships and several fish. I was sick at breakfast. It is rather monotonous." It was less monotonous on the Continent. When the party has been sightseeing, pages of diligently noted facts appear. But in a record of this kind manner is everything and matter nothing, although—or because—the writer is so blithely indifferent to the making of a book, so unconscious of a public round the corner. The public becomes eavesdropper, spies on the magnified raw material, and recognizes some of those vividly unimportant scraps of common life which the retrospective writer does not touch.

Something of this quality is in Mrs. Twisleton's letters, written, almost with the detail of a diary, to her family. Like Roosevelt, she writes as an American in Europe, but unlike him, with the double sophistication of being grown up and picturing a recipient of her letters. The details about dress and meals and habits are included usually for a reason. So much the worse, if manner is the criterion. One returns, therefore, to matter. Any gossip about nineteenth-century celebrities, politics, and travel, by an intelligent woman must have points of interest. Mrs. Twisleton had, beyond this, the advantage of looking with fresh eyes on a society to which an American was still a novelty. But nothing of great value, concerning either English or American impressions, is brought to light.

The four remaining authors deal with selected memories, taken either casually from experience, or more exhaustively from a single subject. Lady Raglan and Mr. de Courville seem to be agreed that, whether the subject is society or stage, little material and less style are the correct ingredients of personal memoirs; though the theatrical anecdotes and the social exclamation-marks are intended in each case to brighten up the page. Sir Arthur Hardinge's recollections, on the contrary, are full of matter, which has, however, the disconcerting quality of slipping through the fingers like fine gravel. The turns and twistings of diplomacy bear a large temporary importance to the actors in the game, but the general reader, some thirty years after the event, is less inclined to share in the enthusiasm. For those who enjoy the study of diplomatic methods for their own sake, Sir Arthur's book may certainly be recommended, since its localities—Constantinople, Egypt, Africa, and Persia—are picturesque. The behaviour and outlook of Eastern Ministers being even stranger than those of Western ones, Sir Arthur's narrative is frequently enlivened by an incident or character sketch of oriental flavour.

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other, through an episode enfeebled by disunity that a pair of chronologically irreconcilable similes augments—"a scrum in football play" (that "play" dragged in for rhyme), and a wild boar in the forest of Dean. Tennyson, wiser in his "Idylls," stuck manfully to the Albert Memorial style, and won, just preserving his "Modred whom he left in charge of all, the traitor—ah sweet lady," with the Victorian salt; but Mr. Masefield can weaken, all savour lost, to this:—

"He used our husbands only to disgrace

The Queen and Lancelot and take their place . . ."

which is no longer poetry, but her skeleton ravaged by that fatal craving for simplicity that has undone more than one Edwardian poet.

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This Film Business. By RUDOLPH MESSEL. (Benn. 12s. 6d.)

Parnassus to Let: An Essay about Rhythm in the Films. By ERIC WALTER WHITE. (Hogarth Press. 2s. 6d.)

Heracitus: or, The Future of Films. By ERNEST BETTS. (Kegan Paul. 2s. 6d.)

THE film art has yet to discover its Aristotle. Its literature is small, and not particularly interesting. Writers find it easier to be enthusiastic than thoughtful. Of these three volumes two are sufficiently typical, while the third, Mr. White's—the briefest and best—confines itself to a restricted though fundamental aspect. But certain relevant facts do emerge. It is important in any consideration of the film to remember its uniqueness among the arts in that its mechanical accessories came first. When Edison completed his first camera he could put it to no better use than photographing one of his workmen sneezing. The idea of a film art arose later, and incidentally, and even now is only slowly gaining ground. The cinema, to the vast majority of those concerned with it, is simply a money-maker, and they ask no more of it. The whole business is too heavily capitalized to permit of more than the merest margin of experiment. Primarily America is responsible for existing standards of sheer luxury and expenditure, and the American influence has never been so extensive as to-day. Good films are being made, but fewer are available than half a decade ago. Hollywood is unrepentant, and its golden prizes not only draw thither the best of European talent, but dazzle those who are left behind. The best of Continental films we hardly ever see, and England has produced possibly three, or four, interesting items in the last five years. And yet the good films which are being made to-day do display a completer unanimity of method and intention; they are less recklessly experimental. A genuine film æsthetic is being evolved at last.

All these books have something to say on this subject. They take it for granted that the film is an individual art-form, borrowing nothing from and in no rivalry with the stage. The film, they agree, is two-dimensional, monochromic, and silent; colour, perspective, and speech doubtless will develop, but the result will be something different, something which may indeed trespass upon the territory of the stage; these things must remain extraneous to the film as such. On this point, as on others, Mr. Betts is not very helpful. His little book contrives to conceal a minimum of analysis and suggestion beneath any amount of comment (most of which is meant to be a good deal funnier than it is) upon comparatively unimportant matters. His principal contribution is a plea for faith: "There is no future for the films until somebody believes in them." This is true, but scarcely practical advice.

Mr. Messel does go deeper. His book relates a number of really interesting facts as to the origins, progress, and practice of the film. Unfortunately, besides being unbalanced and haphazard, it is written in a tone of intolerable brightness, no more funny than Mr. Betts, and often just silly (see page 88). The half-wit sprawls over every page, and one's distrust grows of a writer who must arm his every statement with a guffaw. Ultimately that distrust seems justified. Mr. Messel's basic thesis is that the function of the film is not to tell a story but to express ideas:—

"What is it that the film is best suited to express? Obviously, then, those things which cannot adequately be expressed in words. And the things which words are most inadequate to express are IDEAS. I use the word 'ideas' in its unphilosophic sense, as referring to an abstract notion, in the formation of which the evidence of the senses has played but a minor part. The Fairbanks idea is that life is joyful, and motion effortless—an idea in the formation of which the evidence of the senses can have played no part whatsoever!"

The quotation is typically muddled in thought and in the meaning it attaches to certain words, but it states his central notion. Not only its absurdity but his own lack of logic are clearly seen in the conclusion it leads him to, that in "abstraction"—a seeking to represent "pure motion"—the films "have at last found their proper medium." But surely scarcely a medium suited to convey such "ideas" as those expressed by "Robin Hood" or "Greed" or "Intolerance"! Moreover, abstract films can no more satisfy permanently than could the recital of alleged exquisitely lovely word-

sequences in an incomprehensible language. The essence of the film is motion, and since motion can only take place in time, we must have time-sequence, continuity. Human beings being but human, inevitably these sequences must concern in great degree (unless their appeal is to be purely esoteric) some aspects of humanity's world. It is clear that something is indicated not remotely distant from what most persons understand by the word "story"—a portrayal of individuals, isolated or grouped, engaged in some activity, wherein our interest is in what happens to them. This roughest of definitions, granted fairly wide interpretation, does cover practically every film of memorable quality: "Caligari," "The Street," "Tol'able David," "Greed," "The Last Laugh," "The Nibelungs," "Potemkin." "Intolerance" gave us four stories linked by an idea, but it was the stories, not the idea, we liked or disliked.

Mr. White, who swiftly dismisses the most ambitious of "abstract" films as "preposterous," happily concerns himself wholly with certain points of method, and the result is that he goes deepest of all, and contrives to say more of value in less space than either of the others. He sees the fallacy of arguing that because a story can be told in words it must not be told in pictures. (The point is that it must be told differently.) A film may portray a story, geometrical shapes, even an idea, as desired, but one thing it must have, and that is pictorial quality—it must show things motionless and in motion, rhythmical and rhythmically contrasted. Mr. White sees rhythm as the basis of all film technique, and his extremely suggestive comments offer a foundation for enlightened film creation and film criticism.

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But its own speed forever, and the small
Shapeliness of your world that catches it
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Mr. Abercrombie pursues Energy, and echoes his forcible quest by abrupt rhythm. Thorn of a bramble tears the delicate flesh of Mary, and it becomes a symbol of the negative fury, the nervous irritancy in mankind; the Ghost of Samuel complains at Endor, because it has been conserved by the life-energy of the Witch. A Roman Emperor pursues Vice in his sleep with the intensity of dark idealism. Vision of perfect Virtue lashes the mediæval monk into an ecstasy above the nerves:—

"his thought pure power of light,
And torrents of flashing particles icily bright
His blood, in limbs of flesh like fiery glass.
Not beyond this could vivid substance pass:
As if this speck of being, this body and mind,
Into one essential energy combined
The shining din of the whole creature of light."

Man's attempt to climb beyond his five senses, by speed, mental frenzy, or shock, is symbolized in the plight of the fiend, Asmodeus, told in a splendid poem—written successfully in Old English alliterative staves. In a modern realistic poem, "Ham and Eggs," the strumming of a piano in a brothel becomes that Energy which others have found in the music of the ancient spheres.

Seriousness and larger words which public opinion demands from poets—as a proof that they are not flighty fellows or shameless pagans—are absent in Mr. Davies's songs, but he has felt the demand:—

"I hear men say: 'This Davies has no depth.
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And throws no light on deep, eternal things'—
And would they have me talking in my sleep?"

The great may nod or snore: Mr. Davies is content to be bright-eyed and awake. Scottish reviewers would not allow Keats to remain tiptoe upon a little hill. But Mr. Davies has been happy in his age, for he has been allowed to enter the Kingdom of Poetry as a child, though at times he is a bold one. The lyrical quality of these collected poems is astonishing. No poet has ever played hide-and-seek with his own fancy so happily and so often.

AUSTIN CLARKE.

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MOZART was an incomparable letter-writer, the most intimate of letter-writers, one who would seal himself up in an envelope, drop himself in the post, and turn up unexpectedly on his correspondent's breakfast table. His very presence is in his letters. They are conversations, or have the air of it, rather than, like most letters, somewhat self-conscious monologues. He had a secret to transmit his effervescence as surely by words as by music. In high spirits or in "rage and fury," in jealousy or uxoriousness, borrowing money ("for the last time!"), or refusing to pay it back again, in love, in anxiety, in argument, in every mood and posture he has grace and a kind of divine extravagance, an excess of life like an irrepressible child, but a child endowed with rare intelligence and steadfast purpose.

The Mozart correspondence is very full and covers almost the whole period of his life, from his earliest travels as an infant prodigy with that unusually discerning father of his to the success of "The Magic Flute" a little before his death. Herr Mersmann's selection is judicious, and he

wisely includes a number of Leopold Mozart's letters to, or about, his son. Mr. Bozman's translation (a difficult task, for there is jargon as well as colloquialism to contend with) is admirable. It is to be hoped that others beside musicians will take this new opportunity of reading these delightful letters, where the playfulness is never affected, the nonsense never self-conscious, and not one word seems to have been written for posterity. Perhaps it is this last characteristic that gives Mozart's correspondence some of the flavour of Pepys's diary; we see the man himself and not the public figure.

Only a man of genius could have written as Mozart did. Had all his music perished we would still have valued him as a prince of correspondents. But Schubert's writings are commonplace. We would not expect them to be gay, though his daily life held far more of the pursuit and pretence of gaiety than Mozart's. The Bohemian circle that enslaved him and spent his and its occasional earnings on an occasional communal spree seems to have anticipated every folly that Murger's sentimentality could afterwards invent. It is one thing to endure poverty cheerfully, another to be in love with sordidness. Schubert was not in love with it, but he found himself trapped by the weakness of his character and the turns of chance into subscribing to the general pretence—a pretence of a pretence—of crude jollity. He had not many opportunities, but those he had he missed. Had his music been lost we would have found it difficult to believe that he was a man of even average talent.

Miss Venetia Savile has made a very careful translation of Deutsch's edition of the letters, together with extant portions of the lost diary in which he recorded such aphorisms as "Man is like a ball, the plaything of Chance and Passion." The book will be valuable to those who think it necessary to know a man's life in order to understand his music; but Schubert's life is the music itself. He found no other means of expression.

Mr. Newman Flower's life of Schubert is very disappointing. He says, for instance, that Schubert's father was born in 1763, married at the age of twenty-two (that makes it 1785), and his first son was born in 1784, says Mr. Flower, "a year after the marriage." He makes an even worse muddle of the size of Herr Schubert's school and the receipts from it. He contradicts one of his own illustrations in describing the building it portrays. His translations are unidiomatic and clumsy. Nevertheless he succeeds in giving all the important facts (including one not usually given), and in painting a dim, laborious, but fairly convincing portrait of his sitter.

"Another Way of Music" is Clara Wieck's way, the familiar "Schumann method," at second hand via the Shakespeares. The book contains some equally second-hand impressions of Brahms and some first-hand ones of the Shakespeares themselves.

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Curiously enough, the dullest and the worst written book of the three contains the most valuable material for an understanding of the psychology of the American mass-mind whose workings are coming to be regarded more and more as a threat to the integrity of nations. Mr. Mazur is a realist, he is very concrete, he indulges in very few flourishes, and is wholly devoid of abstractions. In explaining Ameri-

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can prosperity, he unwittingly explains the American mind. America, to be sure, has its exceptional minds, but as it is not these that alarm the world I have deliberately used the collective form. The American mind stands for something as definite as the Russian Communist mind, and European nations are equally apprehensive of one and the other. They are both (as Mr. Mowrer points out), in different ways, intent on achieving the "divine average," the one by standardizing production, the other by standardizing human values; in either case the aim is the destruction of the non-conforming individual and the undisputed establishment of the mass-mind. The Russians talk of the "materialistic dialectic" of history, a conception echoed, in different words, by Mr. Mazur, whose opening contention is that "the major part of American history" has been created and will go on being created on the basis of industry. "Industry," he says, "is too definitely the marrow of our thought and outlook, too subtly interwoven with the fibres of our survival, to play a secondary rôle. As business changes—and business will change—American history will change also."

Ethics and similar values are subordinated to this general proposition, but by no means subverted. Indeed, it is the avowed function of American business to make profits, and—secondarily—to advance moral values in the bargain. Thus, the author cites how the florists' business has been advanced by the advertising slogan, "Say it With Flowers!" "Mothers' Day is a sentimental thought that is paying its way in the profits. . . . Through national advertising, the American public has been made flower conscious." Business has assumed what is, perhaps, the poets' prerogative. But there is no limit to such a conception. I have heard an idealistic youth from one of the big American universities seriously argue that Big Business was going to be the next great religion, since it would see to it that it paid men to be good! Prosperity means happiness, and prosperity depends upon two facts mutually antagonistic, mass-production and "novelty appeal." It is difficult to have mass production when the public continually demands new styles. The author asserts that the combination of the two is pos-

sible. The consumer must be taught to desire new things, to discard his old make of car as soon as a new one comes into the market; an impetus must be given to "rivalry with neighbours and friends." But as there is a limit to ready money, the instalment plan has been devised on the principle that it is a "human tendency to be less willing to part with the accumulation of past effort, represented by the balance in the bank, than to agree to part with future earnings for which there has not yet been created a paternal attitude of possession and protection." In short, prosperity depends almost entirely on ceaseless production, which in turn depends on ceaseless stimulation of the consumer to buy. There is food for the satirist here.

Mowrer's is quite a different sort of book. It contains the best definition we have had yet of the American type of civilization, and its relation to the world. It is surely surprising that no one before has called attention to the fact that the American civilization is but an inherent aspect of European civilization, having been merely accelerated by the discovery of America, but inevitable in any case. The book is also valuable for the parallels drawn between the collective spirit of America and that of Communist Russia. The author builds some conclusions on Spengler's theory and indulges in prophecies whose validity we have no way of proving. I prefer Mr. Mowrer when he is himself and not a disciple of Spengler. He has ably diagnosed the disease known as "Americanization," and he has also shown that there is no ready cure for it. It is an able book, full of original thought.

Mr. Beverley Nichols is somewhat touched with the malady discussed by Mr. Mowrer, and its manifestations should on the whole be pleasant to the reader in search of amusement. He is essentially a romantic, and the American world has provided him with romance which he cannot find here; but on occasion he can be as indignant at the travesty of life as heartily as the most zealous reformer. He can be wrong-headed too when he likes, but in his witty mood he is infectious.

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